



TORAH OHR • MEGILLAS ESTHER • MAAMAR 10

וקבל היהודים את אשר החלו לעשות

“And the Jews Accepted What
They Had Begun to Do”



What Israel began at Sinai, drawing the Infinite Light into the vessels of Torah and mitzvos, they completed in Haman's days, when a year of self-sacrifice brought them to the self-nullification of acknowledgment and a complete acceptance of the Torah.

DEDICATED IN HONOR OF

מוקדש לכבוד הגאון המקובל רבי לוי יצחק שניאורסאהן זצ"ל

Dedicated in honor of the Rebbe's father, Reb Levi Yitzchok



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THE BIG IDEA

What Israel began at Sinai, drawing the Infinite Light into the vessels of Torah and mitzvos, they completed in Haman's days, when a year of self-sacrifice brought them to the self-nullification of acknowledgment and a complete acceptance of the Torah.

Each section: the Hebrew, then the translation, then a short explanation under a gold rule. Small numbers in the Hebrew are the notes at the end.

THE MAAMAR IN BRIEF

Esther 9:23 says the Jews “accepted what they had begun to do”: a beginning at Sinai, completed under Haman. First the Alter Rebbe asks what the Giving of the Torah added, if Avraham already kept the Torah. Avraham's love was a self-nullification born of contemplating that all the worlds are only G-d's “Name”; the soul can hold such love only as “running and returning,” and Avraham's lofty soul-root is not everyone's. The 613 commandments give every Jew that running and returning: they are the King's limbs, vessels for the Infinite Light. Light shows only through a vessel, as fire needs a wick, and in its root the vessel is higher than the light; hence “we will do and we will hear.” Haman's “royal garment” and “horse” become Torah and mitzvos drawn down through self-nullification, which lifts a person beyond the sitra achra and transforms it. Sinai only began this drawing down. In Haman's days Jews who could have saved themselves by abandoning their faith stood ready to die for a whole year, and through that self-sacrifice, an acknowledgment of G-d beyond understanding, they accepted the Torah completely.

OUTLINE

- | | | |
|----------|---|------|
| 1 | Begun at Sinai, completed under Haman | ¶1 |
| | The verse's “had begun” and “accepted”, and the question: what did the Giving of the Torah add, if Avraham kept the Torah before it was given? | |
| <hr/> | | |
| 2 | Avraham's running and returning | ¶2-3 |
| | Avraham's love was a self-nullification born of contemplating that the worlds, even sovev, are only G-d's “Name”; the soul can hold it only as running and returning, until the Time to Come. | |
| <hr/> | | |
| 3 | The commandments as vessels | ¶4-8 |
| | The 248 and 365 commandments give everyone running and returning; they are the King's limbs, vessels for the Infinite Light, and light shows only through a vessel, whose root is higher. | |

4 Avraham and the Torah

¶9

Avraham kept the Torah as a vessel for its light, but the mitzvos themselves, from a higher root, were given only at Sinai.

5 The garment and the horse

¶10-12

The royal garment is Torah and mitzvos; the horse that draws it down is self-nullification, which first lifts a person beyond the reach of the sitra achra.

6 Casting down and transforming

¶13-15

Drawn down, self-nullification transforms the attributes, as the “mother” cleans her son; it brings salvation, the garment given through Michael, and the righteous proclaimed “holy.”

7 Complete acceptance through self-sacrifice

¶16

Sinai began the drawing down gradually; in Haman’s days a year of self-sacrifice, the self-nullification of acknowledgment, made the acceptance complete.

KEY CONCEPTS

running and returning (ratzo vashov) רצוא ושוב

The soul’s surge toward G-d and its return. It was Avraham’s “going and journeying”; through the commandments it is open to all, running in the positive commandments and returning in the negative ones.

self-nullification (bittul) ביטול

Setting aside one’s own sense of self before G-d. Here it is the “horse” that draws the light into the mitzvos, lifts a person beyond the sitra achra, and transforms it.

vessel and light כלי ואור

Light shows only through a vessel, as fire only through a wick. The mitzvos done in deed are the vessels, and in their root the vessels are higher than the light.

ever Mah אבר מ”ה

A play on Avraham’s name: its letters spell ever Mah (אבר מ”ה), “a limb of Mah,” a vessel for Chochmah, which is called koach mah, “the power of what”; it made his soul a chariot for the Torah’s light.

acknowledgment (hodayah) הודאה

Unlike blessing, which is revelation, acknowledgment is directed at the Infinite Light itself, beyond all grasp. The name Yehudim comes from it, and it is utter self-nullification.

self-sacrifice (mesirus nefesh) מסירות נפש

Giving oneself over entirely to G-d. In Haman’s days it was a whole year’s readiness to die rather than abandon the faith, and it brought the complete acceptance of the Torah.

SECTION 1 • 11

Begun at Sinai, completed under Haman

1 וקבל היהודים¹ את אשר החלו לעשות. פי' החלו במתן תורה שאמרו נעשה ונשמע² ואז היתה עדיין נקרא³ [נקראת] בשם התחלה.

“And the Jews accepted what they had begun to do.” The meaning is: “they had begun” at the Giving of the Torah, when they said “we will do and we will hear,” and at that time it was still called by the name “beginning.”

The maamar opens with Esther 9:23, “the Jews accepted what they had begun to do.” The Alter Rebbe reads “had begun” as pointing back to Sinai: when Israel said “we will do and we will hear,” they began to accept the Torah, but that acceptance was still only a beginning.

אבל בימי המן וקבל היהודים וגו'. קבלה גמורה.⁴ ולהבין זה צריך להבין ענין מתן תורה שניתנה לישראל.

But in the days of Haman, “the Jews accepted,” etc.: a complete acceptance. To understand this, one must understand the matter of the Giving of the Torah, that it was given to Israel.

In the days of Haman, by contrast, the verse says “the Jews accepted”: this was a complete acceptance. Later in Megillas Esther (98a), the discourse “Chayav inish” reads the verse the same way, with the Sages: at Sinai the mountain was held over Israel like a barrel, and they accepted the Torah again in the days of Achashverosh. To see what was completed then, one must first understand what the Giving of the Torah itself was.

והלא אברהם אבינו ע"ה [עליו השלום] קיים את כל התורה⁵ עד שלא ניתנה⁶ ומה זו מעלת נתינתה:⁷

Yet did not Avraham our father, peace be upon him, fulfill the entire Torah before it was given? So what is the advantage of its being given?

The question behind this: as the Mishnah at the end of Kiddushin says, Avraham kept the entire Torah before it was given. If the Torah could be kept without being given, what did its giving at Sinai add? The Alter Rebbe asks the same question in Torah Ohr, Yisro (67d, the discourse “Vechol ha'am”), and answers there that the 248 commandments are the 248 limbs of the King, each mitzvah drawing down one of G-d's Names.

SECTION 2 • ¶2-3

Avraham's running and returning

2 אך הנה מעלת אברהם אבינו ע"ה [עליו השלום] שהיה הלך ונסוע.^{8,9} דהיינו שהיה בבחי' רצוא ושוב¹⁰ בשביל שהיתה מדתו מדת האהבה בבחינת בטול אליו ית' כי אברהם אבר מ"ה [שם מ"ה]¹¹ כו'.

However, the distinction of Avraham our father, peace be upon him, was that he was “going and journeying”; that is, he was in the mode of “running and returning,” because his attribute was the attribute of love, in a state of self-nullification (bittul) toward Him, may He be blessed, for Avraham [is] ever Mah (“a limb of Mah”), etc.

The answer begins with Avraham. Genesis 12:9 says he went “going and journeying,” which the Alter Rebbe identifies with “running and returning” (Ezekiel 1:14), the soul surging toward G-d and returning, born of his attribute of love in self-nullification. The letters of his name hint at it: אברהם spells ever Mah (אבר מ"ה), “a limb of Mah,” and in Torah Ohr, Megillas Esther (90a), the Alter Rebbe explains that Avraham, whose attribute was Chesed, is a limb and vessel for Chochmah, which is called koach mah, “the power of what.”

ובטול זה הוא ע"י ההתבוננות¹² כמ"ש יהללו את שם¹³ ה' כו' בחינת שם בלבד שאינו מערך עצמותו ומהותו כו'.

And this self-nullification comes through contemplation, as it is written, “Let them praise the Name of Havayah,” etc.: the level of a name alone, which is not in the category of His essence and being, etc.

This self-nullification comes from contemplation. Psalm 148 calls on creation to “praise the Name of Havayah”: what creation relates to is only His “Name,” which bears no comparison to His essence and being. The Tzemach Tzedek (Or HaTorah) identifies this with the contemplation described in Torah Ohr, Vayishlach (“Vayikach min haba beyado”): not the love born of reflecting that G-d is “your life,” but the love that comes when one sets one’s heart on “I, Havayah, have not changed,” until the soul longs to be nullified and included in the One.

כי הוא דהיינו עצמותו ומהותו ית' צוה ונבראו¹⁴ שלא שייך עליו ית' לומר שברא את העולמות כנ"ל.

For “He” — that is, His essence and being, may He be blessed — “commanded, and they were created”; for it does not apply to Him, may He be blessed, to say that He created the worlds, as mentioned above.

The next words come from Psalms 148:5, “for He commanded, and they were created.” The Alter Rebbe reads “He” as G-d’s very essence: of the essence one cannot even say that it “created” the worlds.

כי לשון ברא¹⁵ משמע שיש כח הפועל בנפעל¹⁶ ולא שייך זה אלא בשמותיו ית' כמ"ש בראשית ברא אלהים¹⁷ הוא שמותיו של¹⁸ הקב"ה.

For the term “created” (bara) implies that the power of the maker is in the thing made, and this applies only to His Names, may He be blessed, as it is written, “In the beginning Elokim created”: that is, the Names of the Holy One, blessed be He.

To say that something was “created” implies that the creator’s power is present in what it made. That applies only to G-d’s Names, which is why the Torah says “In the beginning Elokim created”: Elokim, a Name, is what creates. In Likkutei Torah, Shir HaShirim (14c), the Alter Rebbe draws the same line: “You created” would mean that His essence is drawn into the act, while the worlds come only from a glimmer that does not touch it, “as though He commanded, and they were created” of themselves.

אבל עצמותו ומהותו כביכול הוא רק כאלו צוה ונבראו ממילא שאין להם ערך ויחוס כלל אליו ית'

But [as for] His essence and being, as it were, it is only as though “He commanded, and they were created” of themselves, for they have no comparison or relation to Him, may He be blessed, at all.

Relative to His essence, the worlds come about as though merely at His word, of themselves, since they bear no comparison or relation to Him at all.

כי נשגב שמו לבדו.¹⁹ פ"י אפילו בחינת נשגב. דהיינו בחי' סובב כל עלמין אינו אלא בחינת שמו לבדו.

For “exalted is His Name alone.” The meaning is: even the level of “exalted,” that is, the level of the light that encompasses all worlds (sovev kol almin), is only the level of “His Name alone.”

Psalms 148:13 says “exalted is His Name alone.” The Alter Rebbe reads it: even what is “exalted,” the light that encompasses all worlds (sovev kol almin), which is beyond the worlds, is still only His “Name” compared with His essence. In Torah Ohr, Mishpatim (79b), he explains that “exalted” means far removed from the emanated worlds, so that only a radiance from His Name gives life to earth and heaven.

3 ואי לזאת תתבטל אליו ית' הנפש בבחי' בטול באור א"ס ב"ה ממש שאין כח בנפש להכיל את אור

האהבה זו כי אם בבחי' רצוא ושוב²⁰ וזו היתה מעלת ומדרגת אברהם הלוח ונסוע.

Accordingly, the soul becomes nullified to Him, may He be blessed, in a state of self-nullification (bittul) in the Infinite Light (Or Ein Sof), blessed be He, itself; for the soul has no power to contain the light of this love except in the mode of “running and returning.” And this was the distinction and rank of Avraham: “going and journeying.”

Contemplating this, the soul is nullified in the Infinite Light itself. But no soul can hold such love steadily, so it comes as “running and returning,” a surge toward G-d and a return. This was Avraham’s rank: “going and journeying.”

אך לעתיד לבא כתיב כי עין בעין יראו²¹ לפי שאז נאמר בבכי יבאו

But of the Time to Come it is written, “for eye to eye they shall see,” because at that time it is said, “with weeping they shall come.”

In the Time to Come, the era of the final redemption, it will be otherwise: “eye to eye they shall see” (Isaiah 52:8), seeing G-dliness openly. And of that time Jeremiah says, “with weeping they shall come” (Jeremiah 31:9).

שהבכיה היא מחמת קבלת השמחה הגדולה²² ורוב התענוג המתגלה למעלה מעלה מאשר תוכל הנפש שאת²³ שלכן הוא בוכה ומוריד דמעות לפי שאין מעצור בבחי' כלי וגבול כנודע:

For the weeping comes from receiving the great joy and the abundance of delight that is revealed, far, far beyond what the soul can bear; and therefore one weeps and sheds tears, because there is no restraint in the form of a vessel and limit, as is known.

The weeping will come from receiving joy and delight revealed far beyond what the soul can bear; since no vessel or limit holds it back, it overflows as tears. In Torah Ohr, Vayishlach (26a), the Alter Rebbe explains that when the vessel below is too small to hold a great joy, the joy gathers in the mind and pushes out tears.

SECTION 3 • ¶4-8

The commandments as vessels

4 והנה מעלת אברהם היתה גדולה מאד מצד שרש נשמתו²⁴ ולא כל האדם זוכה לזה. לכך נתנה התורה רמ"ח מ"ע [מצות עשה] ושס"ה לא תעשה שהן הן בחי' רצוא ושוב²⁵.

Now, Avraham's distinction was very great by virtue of the root of his soul, and not every person merits this. Therefore the Torah was given: 248 positive commandments and 365 negative commandments, which are the very level of “running and returning.”

Avraham reached this through the lofty root of his soul, which not everyone has; the Tzemach Tzedek (Or HaTorah) explains how lofty: even Adam's root is from supernal Chochmah, while Avraham's is from Keser. That is why the Torah was given with its 248 positive and 365 negative commandments: they are themselves “running and returning,” open to every person.

רצוא במצות עשה. ושוב במצות לא תעשה. כי המצות הן כלים לאור א"ס ב"ה המלוכש בהם.

“Running” is in the positive commandments, and “returning” in the negative commandments. For the mitzvos are vessels for the Infinite Light (Or Ein Sof), blessed be He, which is enclothed in them.

The positive commandments are the “running,” and the negative commandments the “returning.” Both are vessels in which the Infinite Light is enclothed.

5 וכמו שכתוב וירד ה' על הר סיני.²⁶ כי רמ"ח פקודים הם רמ"ח אברים דמלכא.²⁷

As it is written, “Havayah descended upon Mount Sinai.” For the 248 commandments are the 248 limbs of the King.

At Sinai “Havayah descended upon Mount Sinai” (Exodus 19:20): G-dliness came down into the commandments. The Tikkunei Zohar speaks of the 248 commandments as the 248 “limbs of the King.”

כמו האבר שהוא כלי שבו מלובש החיות מן המוח כך המצות הם כלים ואברים להחיות הנמשך מן החכמה דאורייתא מחכמה נפקת שבה מלובש אור א"ס ב"ה ממש וע"י זה יהיה גילוי אור א"ס ב"ה ממש בנפש האדם.

Just as a limb is a vessel in which the life-force from the brain is en clothed, so the mitzvot are vessels and limbs for the life-force drawn from Chochmah (wisdom), for “the Torah comes forth from Chochmah,” in which the Infinite Light (Or Ein Sof), blessed be He, itself is en clothed; and through this there will be a revelation of the Infinite Light, blessed be He, itself in the soul of man.

A limb is a vessel for the life-force that flows from the brain; so the mitzvot are vessels and limbs for the life-force drawn from Chochmah. The Torah comes from Chochmah, and in it the Infinite Light itself is en clothed, so through the mitzvot the Infinite Light itself is revealed in a person's soul.

6 וזהו ענין נעשה ונשמע.²⁸ נעשה היא כחי כלי בעשיית המצות בפועל ממש. ונשמע מלשון וישמע שאול²⁹ לשון אסיפה שיתאסף ויתקבץ לתוכן המשכות מאור א"ס ב"ה.

And this is the meaning of “we will do and we will hear.” “We will do” is the level of a vessel, in the doing of the mitzvot in actual deed. And “we will hear” (nishma) is from the expression “and Shaul assembled (vayeshama),” a term of gathering; that there be gathered and collected into them drawings-down from the Infinite Light (Or Ein Sof), blessed be He.

This is why Israel said “we will do and we will hear” (Exodus 24:7). “We will do” is the vessel: the actual doing of the mitzvot. “We will hear” (nishma) is read like “Shaul assembled (vayeshama) the people” (I Samuel 15:4), a term of gathering: through the deeds, flows of the Infinite Light are gathered into the mitzvot.

כי המשכת אור א"ס ב"ה בתורה ומצות תלוי במעשה המצות וקיומן בפועל ממש כי אין אור בלי כלי כנודע מענין יסוד האש ע"ד משל שהוא הגבה למעלה מכל הדי יסודות תחת גלגל הירח

For the drawing down of the Infinite Light, blessed be He, into Torah and mitzvos depends on the doing of the mitzvos and their fulfillment in actual deed, since there is no light without a vessel, as is known from the matter of the element of fire, by way of analogy, which is the highest of all the four elements beneath the sphere of the moon.

The Infinite Light is drawn into Torah and mitzvos only through actually doing them, because light cannot appear without a vessel. The element of fire illustrates this: of the four elements held to lie beneath the sphere of the moon (earth, water, air and fire), fire is the highest.

ואעפ"כ [ואף על פי כן] אינו מאיר בלילה לפי שהאור הבא ממנו אינו מאיר אלא א"כ³⁰ יש דבר למטה שנאחז בו ודולק כמו פתילה ועצי' [ועצים]

And nevertheless it does not shine at night, because the light that comes from it does not shine unless there is something below that it takes hold of and burns, such as a wick and wood.

Yet elemental fire does not light up the night, for its light shines only when it takes hold of something below, such as a wick or wood. Maimonides (Guide for the Perplexed II:30), to which the Kehot note points, likewise says that elemental fire is not luminous but only transparent. The next discourse in Torah Ohr (97b) applies the rule: no light shines or is drawn down unless it has a vessel to take hold of, so love is revealed in the soul only through Torah and mitzvos.

ואחר שכלו ונשרפו העצי' [העצים] והפתילה מסתלק והיה כלא היה ואינו עולה בשם אור כלל.

And after the wood and the wick are consumed and burned up, it departs and is as though it had never been, and does not merit the name "light" at all.

When the wood and the wick are consumed, the flame vanishes as if it had never been and is not called light at all. In the same way the divine light shows only where it has a vessel.

וזוהו ולא עם הארץ חסיד.^{31,32,33,34} חסיד הוא בעל מדות האהבה והיא היא בחי' אור (כי ב' פעמים אור³⁵ בגימטריא ואהבת)^{36,37}

And this is [the meaning of] "nor is an unlearned person a chasid." A chasid is one who possesses the emotive attributes (middos) of love, and this is the very level of light (for twice or, "light," equals ve'ahavta, "and you shall love," in numerical value).

Hence the Mishnah, "nor is an unlearned person a chasid" (Avos 2:5). A chasid is one whose attribute is love, and love is a "light": ve'ahavta (ואהבת, "and you shall love") equals 414, twice or (אור, "light"), which is 207. The equation comes from the Arizal's intentions for the Shema (Pri Etz Chaim, Gate of the Shema 23).

ואי אפשר להיות גילוי אור האהבה כי אם שיהיה בחי' כלי למטה שיתפעל בו. ובחינת כלי זו הוא ע"י תורה ומצות. משא"כ עם הארץ.

And there cannot be a revelation of the light of love unless there is the level of a vessel below that is affected by it. And this level of a vessel comes through Torah and mitzvos; which is not so with an unlearned person.

The light of love cannot be revealed unless there is a vessel below in which it takes effect, and that vessel is made through Torah and mitzvos. An unlearned person lacks it, so the light of love cannot be revealed in him.

וגם עיקר הגורם להמשכי אוא"ס [אור אין סוף] ב"ה שיהי' [שיהיה] מתלבש בתורה ומצות ולהיות אנת חכים³⁸ ולא וכו'. הוא הוא עיקר התורה ועשיית המצות עצמן שבחי' הכלי קדמה לאור בשרשו ומקור חוצבו.

Moreover, the main cause of drawing down the Infinite Light, blessed be He, so that it be encloded in Torah and mitzvos, and so that there be [the level of] "You are wise, but not," etc., is, first and foremost, the Torah and the doing of the mitzvos themselves; for the level of the vessel precedes the light in its root and the source from which it is hewn.

Further, what chiefly draws the Infinite Light into Torah and mitzvos, together with "You are wise, but not [with a knowable wisdom]," a phrase of the Tikkunei Zohar for G-d's wisdom beyond any wisdom we know, is the Torah and the doing of the mitzvos themselves. The reason: in their root, vessels precede light, as the next paragraph explains.

7 וכמ"ש במ"א על פסוק ואלה המלכים אשר מלכו בארץ אדום לפני מלך מלך³⁹ וגוי.

As is explained elsewhere on the verse, "And these are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned," etc.

That the vessel is higher in its root is explained elsewhere on the verse in Genesis (36:31), "these are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned [over the children of Israel]." In Kabbalah these kings are the world of Tohu, whose vessels shattered, and which is higher in its root than the ordered world of Tikkun that came after it.

וכנודע ששרש וחיות המאכל שמדומם צומח חי הוא הגבה למעלה מחיות ונפש החיונית של האדם שלכן המאכל מחיה את האדם ומשיב את נפשו כו'.

And as is known, the root and life-force of food, from the inanimate, the vegetative and the animal, is higher than the life-force and vital soul of man; which is why food gives life to a person and restores his soul, etc.

Food shows the same pattern. The root and life-force of food, whether mineral, plant or animal, is higher than a person's own vital soul; that is why food can revive a person and "restore his soul." The next discourse in Torah Ohr ties the two together: the sparks of Tohu's shattered vessels are higher than the world of Tikkun, so a person is nourished by what is below him, which fell lower because it comes from higher, like a stone that falls farther the higher the wall.

8 ולכן עיקר המשכת אור א"ס ב"ה תלוי בבחי' כלי שע"י מעשה המצות וקיומן בפועל ממש שעושים בחי' כלי מזה נמשך האור ומתלבש בהם.

Therefore the main drawing down of the Infinite Light (Or Ein Sof), blessed be He, depends on the level of a vessel: for through the doing of the mitzvos and their fulfillment in actual deed one makes the level of a vessel, and from this the light is drawn down and enclothed in them.

The main drawing down of the Infinite Light therefore depends on the vessel: by actually doing the mitzvos one makes the vessel, and through it the light is drawn down and enclothed in them.

וזהו ג"כ ענין ולא עם הארץ חסיד⁴⁰ שאי אפשר להיות המשכת אור האהבה מלמעלה כי אם ע"י כלים שהם התורה ומצות.

And this is also the meaning of "nor is an unlearned person a chasid": there cannot be a drawing down of the light of love from above except through vessels, which are the Torah and the mitzvos.

This is also the meaning of "nor is an unlearned person a chasid": the light of love comes from above only through vessels, which are the Torah and the mitzvos.

SECTION 4 • 19

Avraham and the Torah

9 ובוה יוכן שלפעמים מצינו שנחשב מעלת אברהם גדולה שקיים את כל התורה. וכמ"ש וישמר משמרת⁴¹ וגו'. ולפעמים מצינו שנחשב לו לגרעון שלא זכה לתורה.

With this one can understand why we sometimes find that Avraham's distinction is reckoned great in that he fulfilled the entire Torah, as it is written, "and he kept My charge," etc.; and sometimes we find that it is reckoned to him as a deficiency that he did not merit the Torah.

This resolves a seeming contradiction. Sometimes Avraham is praised for keeping the whole Torah, as in "he kept My charge" (Genesis 26:5); sometimes it is counted as a lack that he did not merit the Torah.

דשניהם אמת כי מצד שרש נשמתו היה הגבה למעלה עד שהיתה נשמתו מרכבה ובחי" כלי לאור התורה ואור אי"ס ב"ה הנמשך ומתלבש בתורה.

For both are true: by virtue of the root of his soul he was exceedingly high, to the point that his soul was a chariot (merkavah) and the level of a vessel for the light of the Torah and for the Infinite Light (Or Ein Sof), blessed be He, which is drawn down and enclothed in the Torah.

Both are true. By his soul's root he was so lofty that his soul was a "chariot" (merkavah), wholly given over to G-d's will, and a vessel for the light of the Torah and the Infinite Light enclothed in it.

כי אברהם אבר מ"ה [שם מ"ה] אבר וכלי. אבל כל המצות עצמן שהם מדרגות עליונות יותר מלפני מלך וגו' עדיין לא ניתנו בימי אברהם:

For Avraham [is] ever Mah: a limb and a vessel. But all the mitzvos themselves, which are more exalted levels, from "before any king reigned," etc., had not yet been given in the days of Avraham.

His name says as much: Avraham is ever Mah, "a limb" and a vessel. But the mitzvos themselves come from still more exalted levels, from "before any king reigned" (the higher root of the vessels, paragraph 7), and they were not yet given in his days; they were given only at Sinai.

SECTION 5 • 10-12

The garment and the horse

10 אך על ענין המשכה זו נאמר יביאו לבוש מלכות.⁴² וסוס אשר רכב עליו המלך והלבישו את האיש⁴³ וגו'.

But concerning this drawing down it is said, “Let them bring a royal garment” and “a horse that the king has ridden upon,” “and let them clothe the man,” etc.

The maamar now turns to Haman’s advice to the king (Esther 6:8-9): bring royal apparel and a horse the king has ridden, and clothe the man. These words describe the drawing down of the Infinite Light just explained. The first discourse of Megillas Esther in Torah Ohr, “Yaviu levush malchus,” opens with this verse and reads the horse the same way, as “When You ride upon Your horses” at the Giving of the Torah.

והענין כי הנה לבוש מלכות היינו בחיי תורה ומצות כמ”ש עוטה אור כשלמה⁴⁴ ואין אור אלא תורה דאורייתא מחכמה נפקת

The explanation: the royal garment is the level of Torah and mitzvos, as it is written, “He wraps Himself in light as in a robe,” and “light” means nothing other than Torah; for the Torah comes forth from Chochmah (wisdom).

The “royal garment” is Torah and mitzvos. Psalms 104:2 says G-d “wraps Himself in light as in a robe,” and “light” means Torah, which comes forth from Chochmah.

והוא בחינת לבוש לאור א”ס ב”ה המתלבש בתוכה אנת הוא חכים⁴⁵ וכי והמצות נקראין לבושין שבהם מלובש חסד דרועא ימינא⁴⁶ כו'

And it is the level of a garment for the Infinite Light (Or Ein Sof), blessed be He, which is enclothed within it: “You are wise,” etc. And the mitzvos are called garments, in which is enclothed “Chesed (kindness), the right arm,” etc.

The Torah is a garment for the Infinite Light enclothed within it, “You are wise” (see paragraph 6), the Tikkunei Zohar’s words for a wisdom beyond any wisdom we can know. The mitzvos too are called garments, and in them is enclothed “Chesed, the right arm”: the Sefiros, which the Tikkunei Zohar pictures as the limbs of a body.

והמשכת בחי' לבוש זה שיהיה התלבשות אור א"ס ב"ה בתורה ומצות במעשה המצות וקיומן בפועל ממש הוא ע"י בחי' סוס וכמ"ש גבי מתן תורה כי תרכב על סוס⁴⁷ מרכבותיך ישועה.

And the drawing down of this level of garment, so that there be an enclothing of the Infinite Light, blessed be He, in Torah and mitzvos, in the doing of the mitzvos and their fulfillment in actual deed, is through the level of the horse; as it is written concerning the Giving of the Torah, "When You ride upon Your horses, Your chariots are salvation."

This garment, the enclothing of the Infinite Light in Torah and in mitzvos actually done, is drawn down through "the horse." Habakkuk's prayer, which speaks of the Giving of the Torah and is read as the haftarah of the second day of Shavuot, says, "When You ride upon Your horses, Your chariots are salvation."

11 וביאור ענין זה כי הנה סוס הוא ⁴⁸ בגימטריא ב"פ [ב' פעמים] ג"ס והיינו בחי' כי גאה גאה ⁴⁹ דהיינו להיות ע"י זה בבחינת בטול אליו ית'

The explanation of this matter: sus (סוס, "horse") equals in numerical value twice gimmel-samech (63), and this is the level of "for He is exalted, exalted"; that is, that through this one be in a state of self-nullification (bittul) toward Him, may He be blessed.

Why a horse? The word sus (ס-ו-ס) adds up to 126 (60+6+60), twice 63, written here gimmel-samech (ג"ס, 3+60); the doubling matches the doubled word of the Song at the Sea, "for He is exalted, exalted" (Exodus 15:1), and through it a person comes to self-nullification before G-d. The supplements to Torah Ohr on Megillas Esther explain the two 63s as the horse's two movements, one rising to loftiness and exaltation and the other descending below: the two directions of the next paragraphs.

כי מצות צריכות כוונה דהיינו רעותא דלכא אם ישים אליו לבו ⁵⁰ כו' שאין אור א"ס ב"ה שורה אלא במי שבטל אליו כו':

For mitzvos require intention, that is, the desire of the heart: "if he sets his heart to Him," etc. For the Infinite Light (Or Ein Sof), blessed be He, rests only upon one who is nullified to Him, etc.

Self-nullification is needed because mitzvos require intention, the "desire of the heart." The words of Job 34:14, "if he sets his heart to Him," are read here of a person setting his heart on G-d, for the Infinite Light rests only on one who is nullified before Him.

12 והנה ענין הסוס הוא שמוליך הסוס לרוכבו למקום שאין יכול להגיע לשם מצד עצמו.⁵¹ ויש בזה ב' בחינות שמעלהו הרים גדולים ומורידו בקעות גדולות

Now, the matter of the horse is that the horse carries its rider to a place he cannot reach on his own. And there are two aspects to this: it brings him up great mountains and brings him down into great valleys.

A horse carries its rider where he could not go on his own, up great mountains and down into great valleys. At the end of Vayeshev, Torah Ohr explains the same image: the horse is nullified to its rider, yet with a rider it runs where he could not go, as the animal soul, ridden by the G-dly soul, rises with great force because its root is higher.

כך הנה יש בבחי' בטול זה ב' בחינות ממטה למעלה למקום שאין יניקה ואחיזה לסטרא אחרא עלמא דחירות גיאה על גיותניא⁵² שלא ניתן להם שפע וחיות אם תגביה כנשר⁵³ וגו'.

So too, in this level of self-nullification (bittul) there are two aspects. From below to above: to a place where the sitra achra (the other side) has no nurture and no hold, the world of freedom, “exalted over the haughty,” where no abundance and life-force is given to them; “though you soar like the eagle,” etc.

Self-nullification likewise has two directions, and the first is upward: it lifts a person to a place where the sitra achra has no nurture or hold, called “the world of freedom,” where G-d is “exalted over the haughty” (an Aramaic phrase echoing the doubled “exalted” of paragraph 11) and they receive no flow of life. Obadiah’s words “though you soar like the eagle” (Obadiah 1:4) go on, “from there I will bring you down”: the haughty cannot hold on at that height.

SECTION 6 • ¶13-15

Casting down and transforming

13 וזהו שכתוב סוס ורוכבו רמה בים.⁵⁴ רמה לשון רוממות ולשון השלכה⁵⁵ ושניהם אמת כי מחמת רוממות נעשה בחי' השלכה כו'

And this is what is written, “The horse and its rider He cast (ramah) into the sea.” Ramah is a term of loftiness and a term of casting, and both are true: because of the loftiness, the level of casting comes about, etc.

This is why Exodus 15:1 says, “the horse and its rider He cast (ramah) into the sea.” Ramah can mean “exalted” and also “cast,” and both are true here: the very exaltation of self-nullification casts down what opposes it. Or HaTorah, quoted in the Kehot note, supports the second sense from Psalms 78:9, “archers casting (romei) the bow,” as Rashi and Metzudas David explain the word.

וממעלה למטה להיות נמשך גילוי בחי' בטול זה למטה דאתהפכא סטרא אחרא ואתכפייא כו' כי א"א להיות התהפכות המדות ע"י המדות דקדושה עצמן מאחר שהם זה לעומת זה.⁵⁶

And from above to below: that the revelation of this level of self-nullification (bittul) be drawn down below, so that the sitra achra (the other side) is transformed and subdued, etc. For a transformation of the emotive attributes (middos) cannot come about through the holy emotive attributes themselves, since they are "one opposite the other."

The second direction is from above to below: the revelation of self-nullification is drawn down so that the sitra achra is transformed and subdued. The holy emotive attributes alone cannot transform their unholy counterparts, for the two stand "one opposite the other," equal and opposed.

14 וכמאמר לא כאברהם שיצא ממנו ישמעאל^{57,58} אלא עד יערה עליו רוח ממרום⁵⁹ בחי' בטול באור א"ס ב"ה.

And as in the saying, "Not like Avraham, from whom Yishmael issued"; rather, "until a spirit from on high is poured out upon him": the level of self-nullification (bittul) in the Infinite Light (Or Ein Sof), blessed be He.

The Sifrei contrasts Avraham and Yitzchak, from whom came Yishmael and Eisav, with Yaakov, all of whose children were upright. Here it shows that a holy attribute, such as Avraham's love, does not by itself transform its opposite; that needs "a spirit from on high poured out" (Isaiah 32:15), self-nullification in the Infinite Light.

וזהו מרומז בדברי רז"ל [רבותינו זכרונם לברכה] תבא אמו ותקנה את בנה^{60,61} כו' וכמ"ש אם רחץ⁶² ה' אל תקרא אם אלא אם⁶³ כו'

And this is alluded to in the words of our Sages, of blessed memory, "Let his mother come and wipe her son clean," etc.; and as it is written, "If G-d washes": do not read im ("if") but em ("mother"), etc.

The Sages' parable for the red heifer hints at this: when a maidservant's son soiled the king's palace, "let his mother come and clean up" (Bamidbar Rabbah 19:8), as the cow atones for the calf. So too Isaiah 4:4, "If G-d washes away the filth of the daughters of Zion," where Pri Etz Chaim reads im ("if") as em ("mother").

אם הבנים⁶⁴ היינו אם ומקור המדות היא בחי' התבוננות באור א"ס ב"ה ממש בבחי' בטול ושם מתהפכין כל המדות מהפך להפך

"The mother of the children," that is, the mother and source of the emotive attributes (middos), is the level of contemplation of the Infinite Light, blessed be He, itself, in a state of self-nullification; and there all the attributes are transformed from one extreme to its opposite.

The "mother of the children" (Psalms 113:9) is the mother and source of the emotive attributes: contemplation of the Infinite Light itself, with self-nullification. There every attribute can be turned into its opposite.

לפי שהיא בחי' מקיף כמו ע"ד משל מחשבה שמקפת וסובלת ב' דברים הפכיים ואין שם שליטת בחי' זה לעומת זה:⁶⁵

For it is the level of the encompassing (makif), like thought, by way of analogy, which encompasses and bears two opposite things; and there the level of "one opposite the other" has no dominion.

This is because such contemplation is an encompassing level (makif), above the attributes. Thought illustrates it: the mind can hold two opposite ideas at once, so at that level the rule of "one opposite the other" has no force.

15 וזהו כי תרכב על סוסך מרכבותיך ישועה.⁶⁶ שנמשך בחינת ישועה להושיע משופטי נפשו⁶⁷ ולא הפכא כו'.

And this is [the meaning of] "When You ride upon Your horses, Your chariots are salvation": that the level of salvation is drawn down, "to save from those who judge his soul," and to transform, etc.

Hence "when You ride upon Your horses, Your chariots are salvation" (Habakkuk 3:8): through the horse of self-nullification, salvation is drawn down, "to save from those who judge his soul" (Psalms 109:31), and to transform.

ועי"ז נותנין הלבוש והסוס על יד איש משרי המלך הפרתמים⁶⁸ הוא מיכאל כהנא רבא ענף החסד שהוא המלביש את הנשמה בג"ע [בגן עדן] כו'.

Through this, the garment and the horse are given "into the hand of one of the king's noble princes": this is Michael, the High Priest, a branch of Chesed (kindness), who clothes the soul in Gan Eden, etc.

Through this the garment and the horse are given "into the hand of one of the king's noble princes" (Esther 6:9). The maamar identifies him as the angel Michael, "the High Priest" (the Talmud, Chagigah 12b, speaks of him offering on the heavenly altar), a branch of Chesed, who clothes the soul in Gan Eden.

וקרא לפניו ככה יעשה וגו'. יובן ע"פ מארז"ל [מאמר רבותינו זכרונם לברכה] עתידים צדיקים⁶⁹ שיאמרו לפניהם קדוש כו'. כי הנה קדוש הוא ענין המשכת קודש העליון בו"ו המורה על המשכה.

"And proclaim before him, 'Thus shall be done,'" etc. This will be understood in light of the saying of our Sages, of blessed memory, "The righteous are destined to have 'holy' said before them," etc. For kadosh ("holy") is the drawing down of the supernal kodesh ("holiness") by means of the [letter] vav, which indicates drawing down.

The herald's call, "Thus shall be done to the man whom the king wishes to honor" (Esther 6:9, 6:11), alludes to the Sages' saying that in the future "holy" will be said before the righteous, as it is said before the Holy One (Bava Basra 75b). Kadosh (holy) is kodesh, supernal holiness, with an added vav, the letter that signifies drawing down.

ולעתיד לבא תהיינה כל המשכות ממטה למעלה שעיקר הגלוי יהיה למטה. ומלאכי מעלה יקבלו הארה ממטה כו'.

And in the Time to Come all the drawings-forth will be from below to above, for the main revelation will be below, and the angels on high will receive illumination from below, etc.

In the Time to Come all drawing down will be from below upward: the main revelation will be below, and the angels on high will receive light from below. In Torah Ohr, Toldos (18b), the Alter Rebbe explains why: the Torah was not given to the angels, who have no evil inclination to refine, so the revelation drawn down through refining this world reaches only those below; therefore the angels will say “holy” before the righteous.

SECTION 7 • ¶16

Complete acceptance through self-sacrifice

16 והנה המשכת אור א"ס ב"ה בבחי' הנ"ל החלו במ"ת [במתן תורה] שאז היתה התחלת ההמשכה וכענין מעט מעט אגרשנו.⁷⁰

Now, the drawing down of the Infinite Light (Or Ein Sof), blessed be He, in the manner mentioned above, they began at the Giving of the Torah, for then was the beginning of the drawing down, like the matter of “little by little I will drive them out.”

This drawing down of the Infinite Light began at the Giving of the Torah. It was only a beginning, gradual, like the words “little by little I will drive them out” (Exodus 23:30).

אבל בימי המן וקבל היהודים⁷¹ קבלה גמורה בבת אחת כי יהודים נק' על שם בחי' הודיה. כי יש ברכה והודיה. ברכה היא בחי' גלוי מעולם ועד עולם.

But in the days of Haman, “the Jews accepted”: a complete acceptance, all at once. For Yehudim (“Jews”) are so called after the level of hodayah (acknowledgment). For there is blessing and acknowledgment: blessing is the level of revelation, “from world to world.”

In Haman's days the Jews accepted it completely, all at once. The name Yehudim (Jews) comes from hodayah, “acknowledgment.” There is blessing and there is acknowledgment: blessing is revelation, a drawing down “from world to world,” in Chassidus from the hidden world into the revealed one.

אבל הודאה אינו בחינת גלוי לפי שהיא בחינת הודאה באור א"ס ב"ה עצמו אשר אי אפשר לבא לידי גלוי ואינו נתפס בשום מחשבה רק בבחי' הודאה

But acknowledgment is not the level of revelation, since it is the level of acknowledging the Infinite Light, blessed be He, itself, which cannot come to revelation and is not grasped by any thought except by way of acknowledgment.

Acknowledgment is different: it is directed at the Infinite Light itself, which can never come into revelation or be grasped by any thought; it can only be acknowledged.

והיא בחי' בטול ממש וזכו אז ישראל למדרגת הבטול הגדול ע"י מסירת הנפש על קדוש השם

And this is the level of utter self-nullification (bittul). And at that time Israel merited the rank of the great self-nullification through self-sacrifice (mesirus nefesh) for the sanctification of G-d's Name.

This acknowledgment is utter self-nullification. In Haman's time Israel reached this great self-nullification through self-sacrifice (mesirus nefesh) for the sanctification of G-d's Name.

שהרי אם רצו להמיר דתם לא היה המן עושה להם כלום שלא גזר אלא על היהודים אלא שהם מסרו עצמן למות כל השנה⁷² כולה ולא עלה להם מחשבת חוץ ח"ו⁷³ [חס ושלום]

For had they wished to change their faith, Haman would have done nothing to them, since he decreed only against the Jews; but they gave themselves over to death the entire year, and no thought of [going] outside, G-d forbid, arose in them.

Their self-sacrifice was real: Haman's decree was only against Jews, so anyone who abandoned his faith would have been spared; yet for the whole year (the decree was issued in Nisan for the thirteenth of Adar) they were ready to die, and the thought of leaving their faith never arose in them. The supplements to Torah Ohr on Megillas Esther (120d) describe it the same way: for almost a year, every day and hour, they stood ready to be killed rather than transgress the faith, a self-sacrifice above reason and understanding.

וע"י בחינת מסירת נפש זכו לבחי' קבלה גמורה שנכנס ונמשך להם בחי' אוא"ס [אור אין סוף] ב"ה ממש:

And through the level of self-sacrifice they merited the level of complete acceptance, so that the level of the Infinite Light, blessed be He, itself entered and was drawn down into them.

Through this self-sacrifice they reached complete acceptance: the Infinite Light itself entered them, completing what began at Sinai.

IN ONE'S AVODAH

Love and understanding of G-d are not enough to hold G-dliness; it is drawn into the soul through the vessel of mitzvos actually done, with the heart's intention and with self-nullification. And the fullest acceptance of the Torah comes not from what one grasps but from acknowledging G-d beyond understanding, as the Jews of Haman's days did, who for a whole year would not even think of abandoning their faith.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. If Avraham kept the whole Torah, what did the Giving of the Torah add, according to the maamar?
2. Why can light not shine without a vessel, and how does the example of fire make the point?
3. How does the horse, which carries its rider up mountains and down into valleys, illustrate the two directions of self-nullification?
4. Why can the holy emotive attributes not transform their opposites by themselves, and what can?
5. What is the difference between blessing and acknowledgment, and why did the self-sacrifice of Haman's time bring a complete acceptance rather than a beginning?

SOURCES AND REFERENCES

Notes

PARAGRAPH 1

1 וקבל היהודים

The note lists other versions of this discourse: the Mittlerer Rebbe's transcript of it in Sefer HaMaamarim 5566, and, in the same volume, a second explanation of the Purim discourse.

KEHOT'S NOTE

הנחת אדה"א בסה"מ תקס"ו ע' קכ. וביאור שני לדרוש פורים שם ע' קנב. ראה לעיל בציונים לכ"ק אדמו"ר זי"ע. באוה"ת מג"א ע' קעא המאמר עם הגהות וקיצורים. עוד קיצורים שם ע' קעח. לד"ה וקבל שבת"א שם ע' קעט. קפה. ראה פלח הרמון שמות ע' שצה. ראה המשך מצה זו תרי"מ פרק כו ע' קעב.

2 נעשה ונשמע

When Moshe read the Book of the Covenant to them, the people answered, "All that Havayah has spoken we will do and we will hear," in the plain sense "we will obey." Here it marks the beginning of the acceptance.

Exodus 24:7: שמות כ"ד:ז

וַיִּקַּח סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית וַיִּקְרָא בְּאָזְנוֹ הָעָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָל אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר ה' נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע:

And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the hearing of the people; and they said: 'All that the L-RD hath spoken will we do, and obey.'

Miqra according to the Masorah (CC-BY-SA) • JPS 1917 (Public Domain)

3 נקראת בשם התחלה

There the question is put sharply: "How can it be that at the Giving of the Torah, when at every utterance their souls flew out, it should be only a beginning?"

KEHOT'S NOTE

בסה"מ תקס"ו ע' קכ שואל "איך יתכן שבשעת מ"ת שעל כל דיבור ודיבור פרחו נשמתן וכו' לא תהי רק התחלה". ובד"ה וקבל היהודים תרפ"ו ע' קי (ובסה"מ תשי"א ע' קפ) "דלכאורה הוא דבר נפלא דבמ"ת היו ישראל בתכלית העילוי דגאולה והיו במעמד ומצב משוכב ביותר בענין החירות והחופש, וראו כמה אותות ומופתים ביציאת מצרים, ובפרט בקריעת ים סוף". ע"ש. ובאוה"ת מג"א ע' בישמח הקשה איזה שייכות יש לפורים עם מ"ת.

4 וקבל היהודים... החלו במ"ת... וקבל... קבלה גמורה

After the Purim miracle the Megillah records that "the Jews accepted what they had begun to do, and what Mordechai had written to them": in the plain sense, they took it upon themselves to keep celebrating these days as they had begun to that year. The Alter Rebbe reads "what they had begun" as the acceptance of the Torah begun at Sinai, and "accepted" as its completion in Haman's days (context: Steinsaltz Tanakh).

Esther 9:23: אסתר ט':כ"ג

וַקִּבְּלוּ הַיְּהוּדִים אֶת אֲשֶׁר־הֵחֵלוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר־כָּתַב מָרְדֳּכָי אֲלֵיהֶם:

And the Jews took upon them to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them;

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Shabbat 88a:5'ח"א: שבת פ"ח א'ה"א:588

"וַיִּתְּצוּ בְּתַחֲתֵית הָהָר", אָמַר רַב אֲבָדִימִי בַר חֲמָא בַר חֲסָא: מִלְּמַד שְׂכַפָּה הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עֲלֵיהֶם אֶת הָהָר כְּגִיגִית, וְאָמַר לָהֶם: אִם אַתֶּם מְקַבְּלִים הַתּוֹרָה מוּטָב, וְאִם לֹא — שָׁם תִּהְיֶה קְבוּרַתְכֶם. אָמַר רַב אֲחָא בַר יַעֲקֹב: מִכָּאן מוֹדָעָא רַבָּה לְאוֹרֵייתָא. אָמַר רַבָּא: אִף עַל פִּי כֹן הָדוּר קִבְּלוּהָ בִּימֵי אַחֲשֵׁרֹשׁ, דְּכַתִּיב: "קָזְמוּ וְקִבְּלוּ הַיְּהוּדִים" — קָזִימוּ מַה שְׂקִיבְהוּ כְּבָר.

William Davidson, Vocalized Aramaic (CC-BY-NC)

KEHOT'S NOTE

אסתר ט, כג. שבת פח, א. וראה להלן צח, א.

5 אאע"ה קיים את כל התורה

Or HaTorah points to the discourse "Vechol HaAm" in Torah Ohr (67d): "There he raised this question, and the answer too is along the lines of what is written here; and elsewhere he answered in another way."

KEHOT'S NOTE

משנה סוף קידושין. באוה"ת כאן ע' קעא מציין לד"ה וכל העם לעיל סז, ד "שם הקשה קושיא זו וגם התיירץ הוא ע"ד מה שכתוב כאן ובמ"א תירץ באופן אחר".

6 קיים את כל התורה עד שלא ניתנה

The Mishnah's closing words: Avraham our father performed the entire Torah before it was given, as it says, "because Avraham listened to My voice and kept My charge." The maamar's question starts from this.

Mishnah Kiddushin 4:14: משנה קידושין ד':י"ד

... וְכֵן הוּא אוֹמֵר בְּאַבְרָהָם אֲבִינוּ עָלֵינוּ הַשְּׁלוֹם, (בראשית כד) וְאַבְרָהָם אֶזְנֵנו, וְה' בָּרַךְ אֶת אַבְרָהָם בְּכָל. מִצִּינוּ שְׁעֵשֶׂה אַבְרָהָם אֲבִינוּ אֶת כָּל הַתּוֹרָה כְּלָה עַד שְׁלֹא נִתְּנָה, שְׁנַאֲמַר, (שם כו) עָקֵב אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַע אַבְרָהָם בְּקֹלִי וַיִּשְׁמַר מִשְׁמַרְתִּי מִצְוֹתֵי חֻקֹּתַי וְתוֹרֹתַי:

Rabbi Judah said: an unmarried man must not tend cattle, nor may two unmarried men sleep together under the same cover. But the sages permit it. One whose business is with women must not be alone with women. And one should not teach his son a woman's trade. Rabbi Meir says: one should always teach his son a clean and easy profession, and pray to Him to whom wealth and property belong. For a profession does not contain [the potential for] poverty and wealth, for poverty is not due to ...

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7 ומה זו מעלת נתינתה

There too the Alter Rebbe asks what changed when the Torah was given in physical form, since Avraham had kept it in spirit, and answers as here: Avraham was "going and

journeying toward the south,” in running and returning, until he became a chariot for that level.

KEHOT'S NOTE

ראה לעיל עג, סעי'ג. ובאור"ת מג"א עי קעב שמציין למאמר הנ"ל.

PARAGRAPH 2

8 מעלת אברהם אבינו ע"ה שהיה הלוח ונסוע

In Yitro the Alter Rebbe explains that Avraham was “going and journeying toward the south”: going from level to level until he reached “the south,” the attribute of supernal love, until he became a chariot for that love and it was revealed in his very soul.

KEHOT'S NOTE

ראה לעיל סו, ד ואילך. עג, ד. בסה"מ תרכ"ז (הוצאת תש"ס) עי קסא מציין לכאן.

9 הלוח ונסוע

The Torah tells how Avram, newly come to Canaan, “journeyed, going and journeying toward the south,” moving on by stages toward the Negev. The Alter Rebbe reads Avraham’s continual journeying as the soul’s running and returning.

Genesis 12:9 ט"ב: בראשית

וַיֵּסַע אַבְרָם הַלֹּךְ וְנִסְעַת הַנֶּגֶב:

And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South.

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10 In Ezekiel’s vision of the Chariot, the living creatures (Chayos) “ran and returned, like the appearance of a flash,” darting to and fro. Chassidus uses the phrase for the soul’s surge toward G-d and its return.

Ezekiel 1:14 ד"א: יחזקאל

וַהֲחַיּוֹת רָצוּא וְשׁוּב כִּמְרָאָה הַנֶּפֶק:

And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.

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11 אברהם אבר מ"ה

Or HaTorah points to Torah Ohr 90a, where Avraham is “the level of a limb and vessel for the enclothing of Chochmah, mah, for Chochmah itself is what is enclothed within the emotive attributes.”

KEHOT'S NOTE

באור"ת מג"א עי קעב מציין ללעיל צ, א, שהוא בחי' אבר וכלי להתלבשות בחי' חכ"מ"ה שהחכמה עצמה היא המלוכשת בתוך המדות, עכ"ל.

12 ובטול זה הוא ע"י ההתבוננות

The Tzemach Tzedek explains that this contemplation is the one explained in Torah Ohr, Vayishlach: “when the love comes from contemplating that He is your life, etc.; but when the love comes from one’s setting his heart . . . this second level is what is intended here.”

KEHOT'S NOTE

ראה באור"ת כאן עי קפה מבאר הצ"צ שהתבוננות זו הוא המבואר לעיל בפי' וישלח בדי' ויקח מן הבא בידו “כשהאהבה באה מהתבוננות כי הוא חייך

כו', אך כאשר האהבה באה מאשר ישית אל לבו . . . בחי' זו הבי' ע"ז נתכוין כאן” [בתו"א].

13 יהללו את שם ה'

The psalmist calls on all creation: “Let them praise the Name of Havayah, for exalted is His Name alone; His glory is over earth and heaven.” Creation praises His “Name,” not His essence.

Psalms 148:13 י"ג: תהילים

יְהַלְלוּ אֶת־שֵׁם ה' כִּי־נִשְׁגָּב שְׁמוֹ לְבָדּוֹ הוֹדוּ עַל־אֲרֶץ וְשָׁמַיִם:

Let them praise the name of the L-RD, For His name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and heaven.

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KEHOT'S NOTE

תהלים קמח, יג.

14 צוה ונברא

Of the heavens and their hosts the psalmist says, “Let them praise the Name of Havayah, for He commanded, and they were created”: they praise Him for their very existence. The Alter Rebbe reads “He” as G-d’s essence, for which creation is only as though at His word.

Psalms 148:5 ה': תהילים

יְהַלְלוּ אֶת־שֵׁם ה' כִּי הוּא צִוָּה וְנִבְרָא:

Let them praise the name of the L-RD; For He commanded, and they were created.

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15 כי לשון ברא

There, on the prayer’s words “You were before the world was created,” the Alter Rebbe prefers “was created” (nivra) to the older “You created” (barasa), as in the verse “He commanded, and they were created”: “You created” would mean that His essence is drawn into the act, as a person’s self is drawn into what he thinks, whereas the worlds come only from a glimmer and radiance that does not touch His essence, as though “He commanded, and they were created” of themselves.

KEHOT'S NOTE

ראה לקו"ת בשח"ש יד, ג בדי' קול דודי ההפרש בין בראת לנברא. ראה באור"ת כאן עי קעב.

16 כח הפועל בנפעל

There the Alter Rebbe writes that the source of all the worlds’ life is only a glimmer from G-d, called the Infinite Light, like the light of the sun, which brings about no change; and what the books call “the power of the maker in the thing made” applies below, in Asiyah, which is called “made” (pa’ul).

KEHOT'S NOTE

בלקו"ת שלח מז, א: ומ"ש בספרים כח הפועל בנפעל. וראה במ"מ לשם. ראה לעיל מא, ד. סד, א. סו, ג. ראה אור"ת מג"א עי קעט.

17 בראשית ברא אלהים

“In the beginning Elokim created the heavens and the earth.” The verb “created” goes with the Name Elokim,

since only G-d's Names are present in what they create.

Genesis 1:1 א': ראשית

בראשית ברא אלקים את השמים ואת הארץ:

In the beginning G-d created the heaven and the earth.

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18 הוא שמותיו של הקדב"ה

Or HaTorah adds a gloss (hagahah) at these words.

KEHOT'S NOTE

באוה"ת מג"א ע' קעב יש הג"ה.

19 כי נשגב שמו לבדו

There the Alter Rebbe explains "His Name alone": His Name is not in the category of bringing into being and giving life at all; "exalted" means far removed from the emanated worlds, and only a radiance from His Name gives life to earth and heaven, while Israel are "a people near to Him," drawn close to Him Himself.

Psalms 148:13 תהילים קמ"ח: יג

יהללו את־שם ה' כי־נשגב שמו לבדו הודו על־ארץ ושמים:

Let them praise the name of the L-RD, For His name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and heaven.

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KEHOT'S NOTE

תהלים קמח, יג. וראה לעיל עט, ב.

PARAGRAPH 3

20 Kehot's note points to Ezekiel 1:14 for these words.

Ezekiel 1:14 יחזקאל א': יד

והחיות רצוא ושוב כמראה הבהק:

And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.

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21 כי עין בעין יראו

Isaiah describes Zion's watchmen singing together at the redemption, "for eye to eye they shall see Havayah's return to Zion": they will see it with their own eyes. The Alter Rebbe brings it for the open revelation of the Time to Come.

Isaiah 52:8 ישיהו נ"ב: ח

קול צפיה נשאו קול יחדו ירגנו כי עין בעין יראו בשוב ה' ציון:

Hark, thy watchmen! they lift up the voice, Together do they sing; For they shall see, eye to eye, The L-RD returning to Zion.

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KEHOT'S NOTE

ישע"י נב, ח.

22 שהבכיה היא מחמת קבלת השמחה הגדולה

There, on "and they wept" at Yaakov and Eisav's meeting, the Alter Rebbe explains that weeping comes from joy or from bitterness: when there is a vessel below to receive the joy, it spreads and brings new intellect (mochin), but when

the vessel is too small to hold it, the joy gathers in the mind and pushes out tears.

KEHOT'S NOTE

ראה לעיל כו, א.

23 בבכי יבואו . . מאשר תוכל הנפש שאת

G-d promises through Jeremiah to bring the exiles home from the north: "With weeping they shall come, and with supplications I will lead them"; they come back in tears of joy and of longing. The Alter Rebbe explains the weeping as joy beyond what the soul can bear (context: Steinsaltz Tanakh).

Jeremiah 31:9 ירמיהו ל"א: ט

בבכי יבאו ובתחנונים אוכלים אוכלים אל־נהלי מים בדרך ישר לא יקשלו בַּה כִּי־הִיְיָ לִישָׁרָאֵל לְאֵב וְאֶפְרַיִם בְּכִרִי הוּא:

They shall come with weeping, And with supplications will I lead them; I will cause them to walk by rivers of waters, In a straight way wherein they shall not stumble; For I am become a father to Israel, And Ephraim is My first-born.

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KEHOT'S NOTE

ירמ"י לא, ט. וראה אוה"ת פי ויגש כרך ב שנא, ב, ביאור ע"ז.

PARAGRAPH 4

24 מעלת אברהם . . מצד שרש נשמתו

The Tzemach Tzedek writes: "This is the meaning of Avraham's distinction being very great by virtue of the root of his soul: even Adam's root is from supernal Chochmah, and Avraham's root is from Keser."

KEHOT'S NOTE

ראה באוה"ת כאן ע' קעג "שזהו הפי שמעלת אברהם היתה גדולה מאד מצד שרש נשמתו היינו אפילו אדה"ר שרשו מחכ"ע ואברהם שרשו מהכתר".

25 Kehot's note points to Ezekiel 1:14 for these words.

Ezekiel 1:14 יחזקאל א': יד

והחיות רצוא ושוב כמראה הבהק:

And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.

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PARAGRAPH 5

26 וירד ה' על הר סיני

At the Giving of the Torah, "Havayah descended upon Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain," and called Moshe up to Him. The Alter Rebbe reads the descent as G-dliness entering the commandments, the King's limbs.

Exodus 19:20 שמות י"ט: כ

וירד ה' על־הר סיני אֶל־ראש הָהָר וַיִּקְרָא ה' לְמֹשֶׁה אֶל־ראש הָהָר וַיַּעַל מֹשֶׁה:

And the L-RD came down upon mount Sinai, to the top of the mount; and the L-RD called Moses to the top of the mount; and Moses went up.

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KEHOT'S NOTE

שמות יט, כ.

27

רמ"ח פקודים הם רמ"ח אברים דמלכא

Tikkun 30 speaks of the 248 commandments as the commandment of G-d "in each and every limb of the King." From this the Alter Rebbe teaches that the mitzvot are vessels for the King's life-force, as limbs are for the life from the brain.

Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun 30 • 74a:5 ל תיקון

אדחכי הא קלא סליק ומתפוצץ ברומי רקיעו, והנה אמר, משריין קדישאן דמתבתא דרקיזא דלעילא ותתא, אודרו ואתקנו לקדמות מטרוניתא, דקא אתיא למיעאל קדם מלכא, בכמה קשורין דפקודין דעשה, קומו משריין לקדמותה, אדחכי הא קלא תנינא הנה מתערא לגבי מארי מפתח, הא שכינתא קא אתיא למיעאל להיכלא דילה, אדניי שפתי תפתח.

Tikkunei Zohar - Vocalized (Public Domain)

KEHOT'S NOTE

ראה ת"ז ת"ל.

PARAGRAPH 6

28

נעשה ונשמע

The people's answer at Sinai: "All that Havayah has spoken we will do and we will hear." Here "we will do" is the vessel and "we will hear" the gathering of light into it.

שמות כ"ד:7:1 Exodus

ויקח ספר הברית ויקרא בקונו העם ויאמרו כל אשר-דבר ה' נעשה ונשמע:

And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the hearing of the people; and they said: 'All that the L-RD hath spoken will we do, and obey.'

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29

וישמע שאול

Before the war with Amalek, "Shaul summoned (vayeshama) the people and counted them in Telaim." The verb, from the root "hear," here means "summoned" or "gathered," and the Alter Rebbe reads nishma, "we will hear," the same way: a gathering in.

I Samuel 15:4 ט"ו:ד שמואל א

וישמע שאול את-העם ויפקדם בטלאים מאתים אלה רגלי ועשרת אלפים את-איש יהודה:

And Saul summoned the people, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah.

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KEHOT'S NOTE

שמואל-א טו, ד.

30

שהאור הבא ממנו אינו מאיר אלא א"כ

The next discourse explains that ve'ahavta equals twice or, and that no light shines or is drawn down unless it has a vessel to take hold of, so love is revealed in the soul only through Torah and mitzvot; hence Israel put "we will do"

before "we will hear," and "there was no more vessel, and the oil stopped" (II Kings 4:6).

KEHOT'S NOTE

ראה מרינ ח"ב פ"ל. וראה בהנסמן לקמן צו, ב.

31

ולא עם הארץ חסיד

Kehot's note points to Zohar III, 33b for these words.

Zohar III, 33b זח"ג לג,

KEHOT'S NOTE

אבות ב, ה. זח"ג לג, ב. רכב, ב.

32

ולא עם הארץ חסיד

Hillel's saying: "A boor does not fear sin, nor is an unlearned person a chasid." The Alter Rebbe explains that love, the chasid's attribute, is a light that needs the vessel of Torah and mitzvot.

Pirkei Avot 2:5 בידי אבות

הוא היה אומר, אין בור ירא חטא, ולא עם הארץ חסיד, ולא הפלישן למד, ולא הקפדן מלמד, ולא כל המרבה בסחורה מחכים. ובמקום שאין אנשים, השתדל להיות איש:

He used to say: A brute is not sin-fearing, nor is an ignorant person pious; nor can a timid person learn, nor can an impatient person teach; nor will someone who engages too much in business become wise. In a place where there are no men, strive to be a man.

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33

ולא עם הארץ חסיד

The Zohar (Tzav) says that a Torah scholar must have Chesed, and with the yud of Chochmah he is a chasid (חסד with י); one without wisdom is not a chasid, which is why it was taught, "nor is an unlearned person a chasid."

ספר זוהר, צו כ"ב:קמ"ה-כ"ב:קמ"ו Zohar, Tzav 20:145-22:156

and had it not been for the misfortune of the sons of Aaron, there would have been no day when G-d was more pleased with Israel from the time they left Egypt. And the death of the sons of Aaron was deserved for many reasons. One was that they offered incense at the wrong time-at a time when oil and incense were not together (i.e. not when the lamp was lit, v. Ex. 30, 7). Another was that they thrust themselves forward in the place of their father. A third ...

The Zohar; London, Soncino Press, 1933 (Public Domain)

34

ולא עם הארץ חסיד

The Zohar (Pinchas) explains that the Torah was given from the right side of the Holy One, blessed be He, which is Chesed, so one who occupies himself with Torah is called a chasid; hence "nor is an unlearned person a chasid."

ספר זוהר, פנחס ל"קיע-ל"ב:קע"ח Zohar, Pinchas 30:170-32:178

35

ב' פעמים אור בגימט' ואהבת

Kehot's note points to where this is explained further: Pri Etz Chaim.

KEHOT'S NOTE

שער הכוונות כוונת ק"ש. פע"ח שער הק"ש פכ"ג וכו"ה.

36

ב' פעמים אור בגימטריא ואהבת

On the intentions of the Shema: when saying ve'ahavta one intends to draw down two lights to the Kesor of Nukva, and they equal ve'ahavta in numerical value.

פרי עץ Pri Etz Chaim, Gate of the Recitation of the Shema 23:6

חיים, שער הקריאת שמע כ"ג:ו

כשתאמר ואהבת, תכוין להוריד ב' אורות לכתר דנוקבא כמבואר אצלנו, שהכתר שלה הם ב' אורות לבד, והם גימטריא ואהבת. כי מכאן מתחיל כתר דנוקבא, וז"ש ואהבת את, כי את היא נוקבא. ואהבתך את השכינה תלוי בה, בהשפעת אליה את הכתר שלה. ואני שמעתי למהר"ם מינץ ששמע ממורי זלה"ה, שיכוין להוריד אליה ב' מוחין, כי אין לה רק ב'. אך הדעת נוטה למה שכתבתי אני, כי אין מלת אור שייך אלא בכתר, כי ג' פעמים אור הם כתר דדוכרא. ודנוקבא הם ב' לבד:

Pri Etz Chaim (Public Domain)

37

אור בגימטריא ואהבת

Again on ve'ahavta: "intend the two times or (light), as explained above."

פרי עץ Pri Etz Chaim, Gate of the Recitation of the Shema 25:3

חיים, שער הקריאת שמע כ"ה:ג

... אמנם עתה, אין להם ההארה מהם, כי עדיין לא נתפשטו למטה במקומן, לכן צריך לכפול ג' תיבין הי' אליקם אמת, להוריד ההארה ההיא של נה"י דאמא לנה"י דז"א אשר אנחנו בהם, בסוד פרשת ציצית, כדי שיושלמו כל רמ"ח איברים של דכורא. אמנם בואהבת, תכוין לב"פ אור כמבואר לעיל, והם לרחל. וזהו ואהבת את, כי רחל נקרא את, כמבואר בזהר. עוד תכוין, בעטרא דחסד כנ"ל, וז"ס ואהבת, שהוא אהבת חסד. וכבר הודעתך בסוד הציצית, וגם למעלה במלת אחד, כי עטרא דחור"ג נקרא אהור"ה, לכן תכוין בר"ת והיו הדברים האלה אשר, ...

Pri Etz Chaim (Public Domain)

38

אנת חכים

From the prayer of Eliyahu in the Tikkunei Zohar (Patach Eliyahu): "You are wise, but not with a knowable wisdom; You understand, but not with a knowable understanding." The maamar uses it for G-d's own wisdom, beyond any wisdom we can know, drawn into the Torah and mitzvos.

Tikkunei Zohar 17b:3-4 ד'ב:ג:ב-ד'ב:ג:ב

אנת חכים ולא בחכמה ידיעא. אנת הוא מבין ולא מבינה ידיעא. לית לך אתר ידיעא אלא לאשתמודעא תוקפך וחילך לבני נשא. ולאחזאה לון איך אתנהיג עלמא דינא וברחמי דאינון צדק ומשפט כפום עובדיהון דבני נשא. דין איהו גבורה. משפט עמודא דאמצעיתא. צדק מלכותא קדישא. מאזני צדק *תרין סמכי קשוט. הין צדק אות ברית. כלא לאחזאה איך אתנהיג עלמא.

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PARAGRAPH 7

39

ואלה המלכים אשר מלכו בארץ אדום לפני מלך מלך

The Torah lists "the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the children of Israel": Edom had kings long before Israel did. In Kabbalah these kings, each of whom "reigned and died," are the world of Tohu, whose vessels shattered; the maamar recalls the discourse on this verse for the point that the vessel is higher than the light in its root.

בראשית 36:31 ל"א:ל"א

וְאֵלֶּה הַמְּלָכִים אֲשֶׁר מָלְכוּ בְּאֶרֶץ אֲדָוִם לִפְנֵי מֶלֶךְ-מֶלֶךְ לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel.

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PARAGRAPH 8

40

ולא עם הארץ חסיד

"Nor is an unlearned person a chasid": the chasid's love is a light that can be drawn down only into the vessels of Torah and mitzvos, which the unlearned person lacks.

משנה אבות ב'ה:5

הוא ה"ה אומר, אין בור ירא חטא, ולא עם הארץ חסיד, ולא הפלשן למד, ולא המקפדן מלמד, ולא כל המרבה בסחורה מחכים. ובמקום שאין אנשים, השתדל להיות איש:

He used to say: A brute is not sin-fearing, nor is an ignorant person pious; nor can a timid person learn, nor can an impatient person teach; nor will someone who engages too much in business become wise. In a place where there are no men, strive to be a man.

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PARAGRAPH 9

41

וישמר משמרת

G-d tells Yitzchak that the blessing comes "because Avraham listened to My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My teachings." It is the proof that Avraham kept the Torah before it was given.

בראשית כ"ו:5

עָקֵב אֲשֶׁר-שָׁמַע אֲבִרְהָם בְּקוֹלִי וַיִּשְׁמַר מִצְוֹתַי חֻקֹּתַי וְתוֹרֹתַי:

because that Abraham hearkened to My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.'

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KEHOT'S NOTE

בראשית כו, ה.

PARAGRAPH 10

42

יביאו לבוש מלכות

Haman, sure that the king means to honor him, advises: "Let them bring royal apparel that the king has worn, and a horse that the king has ridden." The Alter Rebbe reads

the garment as Torah and mitzvos and the horse as self-nullification.

אסתר ו:ח"ט: Esther 6:8

יבִּיאֻ לְבוּשׁ מַלְכוּת אֲשֶׁר לְבִשְׁבוּ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְסוֹס אֲשֶׁר רָכַב עָלָיו הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֲשֶׁר נָתַן כְּתֹר מַלְכוּת בְּרֹאשׁוֹ:

let royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and on whose head a crown royal is set;

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KEHOT'S NOTE

אסתר ו, ח.

43

והלבישו את האיש

Haman goes on: "And let the apparel and the horse be given into the hand of one of the king's noble princes, and let them clothe the man whom the king wishes to honor"; in the end it is Mordechai who is honored so. The maamar takes up this verse again in paragraph 15.

אסתר ו:ט"ז: Esther 6:9

וְנָתַן לְחִבּוּשׁ וְהַסּוֹס עַל־יַד־אִישׁ מִשְׁרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ הַפְּרָתִמִּים וְהַלְבִּישׁוּ אֶת־הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בִּיקְרוֹ וְהַרְכִּיבֵהוּ עַל־הַסּוֹס בְּרָחוּב הָעִיר וְקָרְאוּ לִפְנֵיו כִּכָּה יַעֲשֶׂה לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בִּיקְרוֹ:

and let the apparel and the horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man therewith whom the king delighteth to honour, and cause him to ride on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him: Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.'

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44

עוטה אור כשלמה

The psalmist praises G-d, "wrapping Himself in light as in a robe, spreading out the heavens like a curtain"; the words can also be read of His wrapping the world in light. The maamar takes the first sense: light, which is Torah, is G-d's garment (context: Steinsaltz Tanakh).

תהילים ק"ד:ב' Psalms 104:2

עֹטֶה־אֹר כְּשֶׁלֶמָה נוֹטֶה שָׁמַיִם כְּרִימָה:

Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment, who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain;

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KEHOT'S NOTE

תהלים קד, ב.

45

אנת הוא חכים

From the prayer of Eliyahu in the Tikkunei Zohar (Patach Eliyahu): "You are wise, but not with a knowable wisdom." Here it names the Infinite Light that is encloded within the Torah, which comes forth from Chochmah.

תקוני זוהר י"ז ב:ג-ד"ז Tikkunei Zohar 17b:3-4

אנת חכים ולא חכמה ידיעא. אנת הוא מבין ולא מבניה ידיעא. לית לך אתר ידיעא אלא לאשתמודעא תוקפך וחילך לבני נשא. ולאחזאה לון איך אתנהיג עלמא בדינא וברחמי דאיןון צדק ומשפט כפום עובדיהון דבני נשא. דין איהו גבורה. משפט עמודא דאמצעיתא. צדק

מלכותא קדישא. מאזני צדק *תרין סמכי קשוט. הין צדק אות ברית. כלא לאחזאה איך אתנהיג עלמא.

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46

חסד דרועא ימינא

The same prayer pictures the Sefiros as the limbs of a body, "Chesed, the right arm; Gevurah, the left arm; Tiferes, the torso," and speaks of the garments G-d made for them. The maamar says that Chesed, the right arm, is encloded in the mitzvos.

תקוני זוהר י"ז א:ט"ז-י"ז Tikkunei Zohar 17a:16-17

ואתקריאו בתקונא דא. חסד דרועא ימינא. גבורה דרועא שמאלא. תפארת גופא. נצח והוד תרין שוקין. ויסוד סיומא דגופא אות ברית קדש. מלכות פה. תורה שבע"פ קרינן ליה. מוחא חכמה איהו מחשבה מלגו. בינה לבא ובה הלב מבין. ועל אלין תרין כתיב *הנסתרות ליי אלקינו.

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47

כי תרכב על סוסך

In his prayer the prophet asks whether G-d's anger was against the rivers and the sea, and answers that He rode out to save: "When You ride upon Your horses, Your chariots are salvation." The Alter Rebbe reads the horses as the self-nullification through which the light is drawn down, and returns to the verse in paragraph 15 (context: Steinsaltz Tanakh).

חבקוק ג:ח"ח Habakkuk 3:8

הַבְּנֵה־רִים תִּרְהָ ה' אִם בְּנֵה־רִים אֶפְדָּה אִם־בְּנִים עֲבֹרְתָהּ כִּי תִרְכַּב עַל־סוּסֶיךָ מִרְכַּבְתִּיךָ יְשׁוּעָה:

Is it, O L-RD, that against the rivers, is it that Thine anger is kindled against the rivers, or Thy wrath against the sea? That Thou dost ride upon Thy horses, upon Thy chariots of victory?

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KEHOT'S NOTE

חבקוק ג, ח.

PARAGRAPH 11

48

סוס הוא בגימט' ב"פ ג"ס

Or HaTorah on Vayera gives an explanation of this gematria.

KEHOT'S NOTE

ראה אוה"ת פ' וירא צה, ב ביאור ע"ז.

49

כי גאה גאה

Moshe and Israel sing at the Sea: "I will sing to Havayah, for He is exalted, exalted; the horse and its rider He cast into the sea." The doubled verb, plainly "He is highly exalted," matches the horse's number, twice 63.

שמות ט"ו:א' Exodus 15:1

אֲנִי יִשְׁרָאֵל־מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לַה' וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְאֹמֶר אֲשִׁירָה לַה' כִּי־גָאָה גָאָה סוֹס וְרֹכְבּוֹ רָמָה בָּיָם:

Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the L-RD, and spoke, saying: I will sing unto the L-RD, for He is highly exalted; The horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.

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50

אם ישם אליו לבו

Elihu defends G-d's justice to Job: were G-d to set His mind upon man, "He would gather to Himself his spirit and his breath," and all flesh would perish. The maamar applies the opening words to a person setting his heart on G-d, and goes on to the self-nullification on which alone the Infinite Light rests (context: Steinsaltz Tanakh).

איוב ל"ד:14 Job 34:

אם ישם אליו לבו רוחו ונשמתו אליו יאסף:

If He set His heart upon man, If He gather unto Himself his spirit and his breath;

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KEHOT'S NOTE

איוב לד, יד.

PARAGRAPH 12

51

ענין הסוס . לשם מצד עצמו

Or HaTorah notes: "In Torah Ohr, end of Vayeshev, he explained this level as the animal soul, that is, that it was taken from the Name Ban, and the root of Ban is from Sag; and elsewhere he explained it as the letters of prayer and the letters of Torah."

KEHOT'S NOTE

עיין באוה"ת מגלת אסתר ע' קעו שמציין "ובתורה אור ס"פ וישב פי' בחי' זו על נפש הבהמית היינו שנלקחה משם ב"ן ושורש ב"ן הוא מס"ג ובמקום אחר פי' זה על אותיות התפלה ואותיות התורה" ע"ש.

52

גיאה על גיותניא

The note points to Or HaTorah on Vayera for this phrase, the same place it cites for the horse's gematria in paragraph 11.

KEHOT'S NOTE

ראה אוה"ת פ' וירא (כרך א) צה, ב.

53

אם תגביה כנשר

G-d tells proud Edom, secure in its strongholds among the cliffs: "Though you soar like the eagle and set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down." Here it shows that at the height of self-nullification the sitra achra finds no hold.

עובדיה א:4 Obadiah 1:

אם תגביה כנשר ואם בין כוכבים שים קנה משם אוריך נאם ה'

Though thou make thy nest as high as the eagle, And though thou set it among the stars, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the L-RD.

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PARAGRAPH 13

54

סוס ורכבו רמה בים

From the Song at the Sea: "The horse and its rider He cast into the sea," plainly of Pharaoh's horsemen hurled into the water. The Alter Rebbe reads ramah as both loftiness and casting down: the loftiness of self-nullification casts down the opposing force.

שמות ט"ו:15 Exodus 15:

אז לשיר משה ובני ישראל את השירה הזאת לה' ויאמרו לאמר אשירה לה' כי גאה גאה סוס ורכבו רמה בים:

Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the L-RD, and spoke, saying: I will sing unto the L-RD, for He is highly exalted; The horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.

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KEHOT'S NOTE

שמות טו, א.

55

רמה . . ולשון השלכה

Or HaTorah cites Psalms 78:9, "archers casting (romei) the bow," where Rashi and Metzudas David explain the word as a term of casting.

KEHOT'S NOTE

באוה"ת שם ע' קעו: (וכמ"ש בתלים (סי' עה, ט) נושקי רומי קשת פירש"י והמצי"ד לשון השלכה).

56

זה לעומת זה

Koheles advises enjoying the good day and reflecting on the bad, for "G-d has made the one opposite the other." Chassidus reads the verse of holiness and its counterpart set opposite each other; here it explains why the holy attributes cannot by themselves transform their opposites.

קהלת ז:14 Ecclesiastes 7:

ביום טובך ה'יה בטוב וביום רעה רעה גם את זה לעמת זה עשה האלקים עלי דברת שלא ימצא האדם אחריו מאומה:

In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider; G-d hath made even the one as well as the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him.

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PARAGRAPH 14

57

לא כאברהם שיצא ממנו ישמעאל

Kehot's marei makom for these words (its note is below).

KEHOT'S NOTE

ספרי דברים לב, ט.

58

לא כאברהם שיצא ממנו ישמעאל

On "For Havayah's portion is His people, Yaakov" (Deuteronomy 32:9): from Avraham came Yishmael and from Yitzchak came Eisav, while all of Yaakov's sons were

upright. The maamar cites it to show that Avraham's holy attribute did not by itself prevent its opposite.

ספרי דברים ש"ב:א-ב' 312:1-2 Sifrei Devarim

... צאו מתוך שלי, אי אפשר שתהיו בתוכה, תנו לי חלקי שְׁאָהָא מכירו. כִּהַּ כְּשֶׁבֶא אֲבָרְהָם אֲבִינוּ לְעוֹלָם יִצְאָה מִמֶּנּוּ פְסוּלָת, יִשְׁמָעֵאל וְכָל בְּנֵי קְטוֹרָה. כִּי יִצְחָק לְעוֹלָם יִצְאָה מִמֶּנּוּ פְסוּלָת, עֲשׂו וְכָל אֲלוֹפֵי אָדָם. הִזְרוּ לְהִיּוֹת רָעִים יוֹתֵר מִן הָרָשׁוֹנִים. וְכִשְׁבָּא יַעֲקֹב לֹא יִצְאָה מִמֶּנּוּ פְסוּלָת, אֲלָא נִולְדוּ כָל בְּנָיו כְּשָׂרִים, כְּעֶנְיָן שְׁנֵאמַר (בראשית כה כז): "וַיַּעֲקֹב אִישׁ תָּם יוֹשֵׁב אֶהְיֶה". מִהִּיכָן הִמְקוֹם מִכִּיר אֶת חֲלָקוֹ? מִיַּעֲקֹב, שְׁנֵאמַר: כִּי חֲלָק הִי עֲמוֹ יַעֲקֹב חָבֵל ...

(Devarim 32:9) "For the portion of the L-rd is His people": An analogy: A king had a field and gave it to tenant-farmers, who began to steal from it — upon which he gave it to their sons — who began to be worse than the first. When a son was born to him, he said to them: Get out of what is mine. You cannot remain there. Give me my portion so that I can recognize it. Similarly, when our father Abraham came to the world, there issued from ...

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59

עד יערה עליו רוח ממרום

Isaiah foretells that the land will lie waste "until a spirit from on high is poured out upon us, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field." The maamar says "upon him" and reads the spirit from on high as self-nullification in the Infinite Light.

ישעיהו ל"ב:ט"ו Isaiah 32:15

עַד־יֵעָרָה עָלֵינוּ רוּחַ מִמְרוֹם וְהָיָה מְדָבָר לְפָרְמַל וְהַפְרָמַל לַיַּעַר יִחְשָׁב:

Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, And the wilderness become a fruitful field, And the fruitful field be counted for a forest.

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60

תבא אמו ותקנה את בנה

Kehot's note points to Bamidbar Rabbah 19:4 for these words.

במדבר רבה כ"ט:ד' Bamidbar Rabbah 19:4

KEHOT'S NOTE

במדבר י"ט, ד.

61

תבא אמו ותקנה את בנה

Why is the red heifer female? Like a maid-servant's son who soiled the king's palace: the king said, "Let his mother come and clean up the filth"; so let the cow come and atone for the deed of the calf. The maamar reads the "mother" as the source that cleanses and transforms the attributes (Kehot: Bamidbar Rabbah 19:4).

במדבר רבה כ"ט:ח' Bamidbar Rabbah 19:8

62

אם רחץ ה' את אלא אם

Isaiah foretells the cleansing of Jerusalem: "When (im) the L-rd washes away the filth of the daughters of Zion," the picture of a parent washing a small child; the verse has the Name Ado-nai, which the maamar writes ה'. Read as em, "mother," the word says that the "mother," the source of

the attributes, washes them clean (context: Steinsaltz Tanakh).

ישעיהו ד'ד:4 Isaiah 4:4

אִם רָחַץ אֲדֹנֵי אֶת צִאֵת בְּנוֹת־צִיּוֹן וְאֶת־דְּמֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם יְדִיחַ מִקְרָבָה בְּרוּחַ מִשְׁפָּט וּבְרוּחַ כְּעָר:

when the L-rd shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of destruction.

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KEHOT'S NOTE

ישע"י ד, ד. פרע"ח שער השבת ש"ח פ"ג. ראה באוה"ת נ"ך כרך א ע' קו בפ"י א.

63

אל תקרא אם אלא אם

In the intentions for washing one's feet in hot water on the eve of Shabbos, one says this verse and intends in the word im, "do not read im but em," for that flame comes from the side of Imma, the Mother.

פרי עץ חיים, שער השבת ג' Pri Etz Chaim, Gate of the Sabbath 3

64

אם הבנים

The psalmist praises G-d, who raises the lowly: "He settles the childless woman in her home as a joyful mother of children." The maamar uses the phrase for the "mother" and source of the emotive attributes, contemplation.

תהילים קי"ג:ט' Psalms 113:9

מוֹשִׁיבִי עֲקָרָת הַבַּיִת אִם־הַבְּנִים שְׂמִיחָה הִלְלוּ־קָה:

Who maketh the barren woman to dwell in her house As a joyful mother of children. Hallelujah.

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65

זה לעומת זה

Koheles: "G-d has made the one opposite the other." At the encompassing level of contemplation, the maamar says, this opposition of holiness and its counterpart has no dominion.

קהלת ז'י"ד:7 Ecclesiastes 7:14

בְּיוֹם טוֹבָה הָיָה כְּטוֹב וּבְיוֹם רָעָה רָעָה גַם אֶת־זֶה לְעִמְתּוֹ עֲשֵׂה הָאֱלֹקִים עַל־דְּבָרָת שְׁלֹא יִמָּצֵא הָאָדָם אַחֲרָיו מְאוּמָה:

In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider; G-d hath made even the one as well as the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him.

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PARAGRAPH 15

66

כי תרכב על סוסך מרכבותיך ישועה

Habakkuk's prayer: "When You ride upon Your horses, Your chariots are salvation." Here the "salvation" is the transformation drawn down through self-nullification.

חבקוק ג'ח"3 Habakkuk 3:8

הַבְּנֵה־רִים תִּרְהָ ה' אִם בְּנֵה־רִים אֶפְדָּה אִם־בְּנִים עֲבָרְתָּ כִּי תִרְכַּב עַל־סוּסֶיךָ מִרְכַּבְתֶּיךָ יְשׁוּעָה:

Is it, O L-RD, that against the rivers, is it that Thine anger is kindled against the rivers, or Thy wrath against the sea? That Thou dost ride upon Thy horses, upon Thy chariots of victory?

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67 להושיע משופטי נפשו

David's psalm ends in trust that G-d "stands at the right hand of the needy, to save him from those who judge his soul," his accusers. The maamar uses it for the salvation drawn down through self-nullification.

Psalms 109:31א"ל: תהילים ק"ט

כִּי־עֲמִיד לַיָּמִין אֶבְיוֹן לְהוֹשִׁיעַ מִשְׁפָּטֵי נַפְשׁוֹ:

Because He standeth at the right hand of the needy, To save him from them that judge his soul.

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68 הלבוש והסוס על יד איש משרי המלך הפרתמים

"Let the apparel and the horse be given into the hand of one of the king's noble princes." The Alter Rebbe identifies this prince as the angel Michael.

אסתר ו:ט"ז Esther 6:9

וְנָתַן הַלְבוּשׁ וְהַסּוֹס עַל־יַד־אִישׁ מִשְׁרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ הַפְּרָתְמִים וְהַלְבִּישׁוּ אֶת־הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בִּיקְרוֹ וְהַרְכִּיבֵהוּ עַל־הַסּוֹס בְּרָחוֹב הָעִיר וְקָרָאוּ לִפְנֵיו כְּכֹה יַעֲשֶׂה לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בִּיקְרוֹ:

and let the apparel and the horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man therewith whom the king delighteth to honour, and cause him to ride on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him: Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.'

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69 עתידים צדיקים

Rabbi Elazar: in the future "holy" will be said before the righteous as it is said before the Holy One, as it says, "whoever remains in Zion and is left in Jerusalem, 'holy' will be said of him." The maamar explains it through the revelation that will be below.

בבא בתרא ע"ה Bava Batra 75b

KEHOT'S NOTE

ב"ב עה, ב. נסמן לעיל יח, ב.

PARAGRAPH 16

70 מעט מעט אגרשנו

G-d promises Israel to drive out the nations of Canaan gradually: "Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you increase and inherit the land." The maamar uses it for the gradual drawing down that began at Sinai.

Exodus 23:30ל'ג: שמות כ"ג

מִעֵט מִעֵט אֶגְרֹשְׁנֵם מִפְּנֵיךָ עַד אֲשֶׁר תִּפְרָה וְנָחַלְתָּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ:

By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land.

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KEHOT'S NOTE

שמות כג, ל.

71

וקבל היהודים

The verse with which the maamar opens: what began at Sinai was completed when "the Jews accepted" in Haman's days.

אסתר ט:כ"ג Esther 9:23

וְקָבַל הַיְּהוּדִים אֶת אֲשֶׁר־הֵחֵלוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר־כָּתַב מָרְדֳּכָי אֲלֵיהֶם:

And the Jews took upon them to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them;

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72

אלא שהם מסרו עצמן למות כל השנה

One of the places the note lists for how the Jews of Haman's time gave themselves over to death the whole year.

KEHOT'S NOTE

ראה ד"ה וקבל היהודים תרפ"ז. תשי"א. ראה גם לקמן קכ, ד. שערי אורה ז, ב. סה"מ עטרית עי שו. תרפ"א עי קצא. תשי"ח עי 118. ת"ש עי 9. ועוד. — ספר השיחות תשמ"ט כרך א עי 327 הערה 13.

73

מחשבת חוץ ח"ו

The footnote observes that the expression "G-d forbid" about something undesirable is not usual in Chassidic discourses, perhaps because they rely on the Torah's opening with beis, the initial of berachah (blessing), through which the undesirable is also negated; yet on this point, that no thought of leaving arose in them, every discourse that mentions it adds "G-d forbid."

KEHOT'S NOTE

"להעיר שהדיוק בלשון "ח"ו" (בנוגע לענין בלתי רצוי) אינו רגיל (כ"כ) בדרושי חסידות [וי"ל הטעם — כיון שסומכים על התחלת התורה באות ביי"ת, ר"ת ברכה (ראה לקו"ש חט"ו בתחלתו, ושי"ג). שעי"ז נעשית גם שלילת הענינים הבלתי רצויים כו'] ואעפ"כ, בענין זה — שלא עלה להם מחשבת חוץ — ממשיכים ח"ו, מדגישים הענין ד"ח"ו" בכל המאמרים שבהם נזכר ענין זה" — ספר השיחות תשמ"ט עי 327 הערה 14.



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THE CHASSIDISHE PARSHA

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The Rebbe asked that the maamarim of the week's parsha, the "Chassidishe Parsha," be learned during that week, spread over its seven days (Sichah of Shabbos Parshas Vayakhel 5725 · Toras Menachem vol. 42, pp. 306-309). Why learn it, and the Rebbe's brachos: likuteitorah.com/about/the-chassidishe-parsha/

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מוקדש לכבוד הגאון המקובל רבי לוי יצחק שניאורסאהן זצ"ל

Dedicated in honor of the Rebbe's father, Reb Levi Yitzchok